

# DIGITAL RECORDER GUIDELINES

With the advent of digital recorders many companies are being sold systems that in the final analysis are inferior to the VHS systems they are replacing. There are well over a two hundred new digital recorders on the security market with each having different formats for recording. While we do not recommend any one recorder over another I would like to offer some guidelines that you may be able to pass along to the people responsible for procurement of new systems.

1. **User friendly controls.** The system should have controls that anyone can operate. Some of the systems sold on the market have control panels that mimic standard VCR controls and these seem easiest for a VCR to Digital Video Recorder transition.
2. **Analog Video/Audio out.** My Detectives take a digital video tape recorder with them to any scene they are called to. If there is not way to plug into the recorder at the scene, they cannot make a copy of the criminal action onto their recorder. Also if your company wants to make a training tape or needs video for an internal problem you will need to be able to output the video to a VHS tape.
3. **Resolution.** Digital recorder salesmen will brag about their units being able to record video for months at a time and will often show the customer video on a monitor that is pulled directly off a camera feed. What they forget to tell the customer is that there is a trade-off between record time and the quality of the video that is recorded. To extend record time, the recorder reduces the size of each individual frame. What this means is that the final product (the video that is actually recorded) will not be sharp and clear, and that the video frame cannot be zoomed in or expanded for more detail. **We recommend a minimum resolution of 640 by 480.**
4. **Proprietary compression.** Many vendors will use their video compression scheme as a selling point. In other words they will claim that someone else that has not downloaded their software cannot view their video. This means that we cannot view any video that is sent to us until we download specific software. This also means that if you want to view and distribute a digital video file within your company, you must also download the same software to every computer that it is to be viewed on. Also, many times the software does not allow us to make copies or print frames from the video file. We recommend that any digital recorder purchased be able to output a standard video file that Windows Media Player will recognize and play.
5. **Storage Media.** When your store captures criminal conduct we need to receive that video on media that we have in our office. Since we have an eight megabyte limit on what we can receive over our internet mail accounts you probably will not be able to email a file to us. Acceptable media at this time are CD-R's, DVD-R's + or -, VHS tape, DVC tape, 8mm tape and digital 8mm tape.

I hope these guidelines can be of use to your company. Feel free to call us any time.

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## VIDEO RESOLUTION COMPARISONS

640X480 IS FROM A VHS VIDEO TAPE

320X240 IS FROM A DIGITAL VIDEO SYSTEM (of the quality seen from all the digital systems so far)



**640X480**



**320X240**